DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 240 548 CS 207 661

AUTHOR Fortner, Robert S.
TITLE The Depths of Depression: Sin and Salvation as Seen by the Radical Press, 1930-1939.
PUB DATE 1 Apr 83
NOTE 45p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (66th, Corvallis, OR, August 6-9, 1983).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Content Analysis; *Intellectual History; Media Research; *Newspapers; *News Reporting; *Periodicals; Press Opinion; *Rhetoric; Rhetorical Criticism; *Social History; United States History
IDENTIFIERS *Journalism History; *Radical Press

ABSTRACT

Through an analysis of the products of the radical press, this paper presents the rhetorical outlines of a cultural history of the 1930s. Following an overview of the "reportage" of the radical press, the paper focuses on that medium's rhetoric, specifically its conscious and unconscious use of religious symbolism. Among the publications analyzed in the paper are "Social Justice," the newspaper of Father Charles Coughlin; "Modern Quarterly"; "Ken"; "The Daily Worker"; "The Silvershirt Weekly"; "The Harlem Liberator"; "The New Militant"; and "People's World"; as well as pamphlets, manifestoes, and other irregularly published materials. In addition, it draws upon materials from biographies, autobiographies, and histories--particularly those written by members of the radical left--and on data from more reformist publications such as "The Nation." The paper concludes that there were clear similarities between the problems identified by each of the radical groups--fascists, communists, socialists, and technocrats--of the 1930s. It notes that the villains and sins they identified were identical, and that the solutions they advocated had one thing in common--they were radical departures from the reformist tendencies in the American tradition. (FL)

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THE DEPTHS OF DEPRESSION: SIN AND SALVATION AS SEEN BY THE RADICAL PRESS, 1930-1939

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Submitted to:
Qualitative Studies Division
Association for Education
in Journalism and Mass
Communication
April 1, 1983

By:
Robert S. Fortner
Department of Communication
State University College
of Arts and Sciences
Plattsburgh, NY 12901

CS 207 661

THE DEPTHS OF DEPRESSION: SIN AND SALVATION AS SEEN BY THE RADICAL PRESS, 1930-1939

> Do not ask me to write of the strike and the terror. I am on a battlefield, and the increasing stench and smoke sting my eyes so it is impossible to turn them back into the past. You leave me only this night to drop off the bloody garment of Todays, to cleave through the gigantic events that have crashed one upon the other, to the first beginning. If I could go away for a while, if there were time and quiet, perhaps I could do it. All that has happened might resolve into order and sequence, fall into neat patterns of words. I could stumble back into the past and slowly, painfully rear the structure in all its towering magnificence, so that the beauty and the heroism, the terror and significance of those days, would enter your heart and sear it forever with the vision.1

Perhaps it was the passion of the age, the sparks struck from the flint of fascism and the steel of socialism, that attracts research on the thirties. Or perhaps it is curiosity about the conditions of the age, or empathy for its victims, or the parallels with the situation of today that picques interest. It may even be that many of the intellectual roots of modernity, particularly its relativism, can be traced there, and so it seems an apt starting point for understanding ourselves.

Tillie Lerner's comments on "The Strike," penned in 1934, provides an apt container to begin to understand the passion of the thirties, passion which spilled over into the reportage of that age, particularly as practiced in the pages of the radical press. In the 1930's, a period of immense suffering for millions of people caused by a severe economic depression, bank failures and loss of confidence, the press attempted to provide "neat patterns of words" which would explain, with "order and sequence," the "beauty and the heroism, the terror and signifi-

cance" of the age and its many visions.

This paper will provide an overview of what Warren I. Susman calls "reportage," more narrowly the reportage of the radical press, and more broadly reportage both as "news" product of reporters and as interpretation of events, trends and circumstances by reporters, editors and publishers. It focuses on the rhetoric of the radical press, specifically their conscious and unconscious use of religious symbolism, and concentrates on print reportage, although it does consider some of the radio broadcasts of Father Charles Coughlin as many of these were reprinted in his paper, Social Justice. It also concentrates on the magazine press, using journals such as Modern Quarterly, New Masses, Ken and Pelley's: The Silvershirt Weekly, and fringe newspapers such as The Harlem Liberator, The New Militant and People's World, as well as pamphlets, manifestoes and other irregularly-published materials. In addition, it uses biographies and autobiographies, histories--particularly those written by members of the radical left, and more reformist publications (loosely speaking) such as The Nation, as appropriate to provide a more holistic and dispassionate account of volatile issues.

The purpose of the paper is to sketch the rhetorical outlines of what would be called most appropriately a cultural history of the thirties as they were seen by the radical press. Obviously this press disagreed, many times vehemently, on the meaning or significance of events, and a full study would provide a rich mosaic of interpretation concerning these events. As Vivian Gornick wrote of the Communists,

> What I remember most deeply about the Communists is their passion. It was passion that converted them, passion that held them, passion that lifted them up and then twisted them down. Each and every one of them experienced a kind of inner radiance: some intensity of illumination that tore at the soul. To know that radiance, to be lit from within, and then to lose it; to be thrown back, away from its light and heat; to know thereafter the ordinary greyness of life, black and lightless; that was to know a kind of exaltation and dread that can be understood only, perhaps, by those who have loved deeply and suffered the crippling loss of that love.[2]

Warren I. Susman has denied that the political interest of many American intellectuals of the thirties was necessarily ideological. As a matter of fact, he argues, "many of the most brilliant and long-lasting contributions to political analysis written in the period were distinctly anti-ideological."[3] Whether one would judge Susman's conclusion to be valid or not depends on how one defines two key terms--"intellectuals" and "long-lasting." If, by intellectuals, one means only scholars in the academy or members of the *belles lettres*, then Susman must be judged correct. If, however, one refers to those who attempted to engage in disputation over the major concerns of the day--the nature of capitalism, Fascism and Communism and their comparative abilities to provide for society's well-being, peace, neutrality or war, unionization, and so on, then Susman's conclusion is problematic. Much of the rhetoric of the period was highly charged ideologically. In the same way, if by long-lasting one means sustained relevance to political theory narrowly conceived, Susman is assuredly correct. If, however, one takes a longer and more slippery cultural perspective, then it may be impossible to affirm or refute Susman's claim. Culture is an absorptive and

dynamic whole, not easily dissected in efforts to determine primary causes or intellectual roots except in relatively limited biographical efforts. it is possible to interpret the past, but more troublesome to determine with any precision is its influence on the present, except to the extent it provided new conditions that called for response, thus turning attention to some matters, priorities and strategies as opposed to others. In the thirties many competitive ideologies clamored for attention. It was in the maelstrom of ideological conflict that alliances were forged, maintained, altered and discarded, compromises on legislative priorities and strategies hammered out, candidates elected, movements organized, disputes adjudicated and persecutions pursued. It may be that America today is seeing the final notes of the thirties chorus being played out. We are called to determine whether or not the tune is still on key. And if a new score is written in this generation, it will be added to those of the past, accepting some, and discarding some, of what was composed before. Who, then, can determine with any accuracy what is long-lasting?

Taking a cultural view of the thirties is an appropriate endeavor. As Susman points out, it was in this decade that "culture" itself was redefined, leaving behind the traditional considerations constructed by Mathew Arnold and other intellectuals, in favor of a more anthropological construction.[4] Also, as Susman adds, "It was during this period that we find, for the first time, frequent reference to 'an American Way of Life.'"[5] This "forbidden fruit"--the American dream--of the thirties was

thus understood to be the norm, although inaccessible for tens of millions of Americans. And finally, "Again, the effort to define precisely the nature of American culture itself--as it had been historically and as it was now--characteristic of so much of the writing of the 1930's is no new effort, but it appears more widespread and central than in any time previous . . . . The search was to continue throughout the decade in the most overwhelming effort ever attempted to document in art, reportage, social science, and history the life and values of the American people."[6]

Whether the thirties were a decade of highly ideological political debate or not, it was a period of intense partisanship. For instance, Ken explained as part of its apology for inadvertently offending "the sensibilities of British readers" in an earlier published cartoon that the magazine was "consistently pro-British, while admittedly anti-Tory, pro-German while avowedly anti-Nazi, pro-Italian while openly anti-fascist, and, in general pro-humanitarian while anti-authoritarian . . . . "[7] The magazine also solicited subscriptions with a full-page advertisement in the bold black letters of 42 point Headline Gothic and 12 point type declaring,

> **IF BABY-KILLING** strikes you as a fine idea, or if you believe that personal liberty is just a phrase, then KEN is not for you. But if you feel that civilization is long overdue for a comeback, you will think twice before you shrug aside the responsibility of allying yourself with the force for human decency that KEN, in the name of common sense, now is and will be.[8]

Ken also carried advertisements for World Peaceways, one of which showed an infant lying on its back with the caption, "Nice fresh

babies . . . 79¢ a pound!" It advised Mothers to breed, "breed for the glory of your heroic Leaders. Take good care of that cuddly baby, Mother, so he'll grow up big and strong and the butchers will be pleased with him."[9] Another ad showed a small child standing in a crib and was captioned, "**MILITARY OBJECTIVE!**" "*Today*," the ad said, "kiddies are *military objectives* to be blown to bits by bombs, to be buried in the ruins of their schools, to be raked by machine-gun fire as they cling to their mothers' skirts."[10]

Radicals of all persuasions couched their interpretations and advocated their solutions in such black-and-white terms, painting some groups or institutions as oppressors or villains and others as victims.[11] This press also engaged in what it apparently saw as a "holy war," replete with God- and devil-terms, lists of grievous or deadly sins and means to salvation. From technocrats to revolutionists these advocates diagnosed problems, vilified culprits and conspirators and prescribed remedies. As Homer Lawrence Morris explained in 1934,

> Opulence and poverty existing side by side in the same community, create barriers between individuals and groups which separate the members of society into antagonistic factions. In this soil the class struggle germinates and the way is prepared for violent revolutionary action. In the presence of luxury and destitution, it is easy for the agitator to find plenty of fuel to fire the smoldering flames of discontent and class hatred. It is difficult for human sympathy and understanding to bridge the chasm caused by suspicion, rivalry, jealousy, and hatred.12

Important cultural products of the period were the tracts seeking salvation or monitoring the efforts of rival "sects." As

William Z. Foster wrote later about this last activity,

> The Communist Party paid close attention to the "panacea" movements. Although often led by dangerous demagogues, these movements were not wholly in vain. They dramatized the plight of the workers, the unemployed, the aged, the farmers, and the impoverished petty bourgeoisie. They also evidenced the determination of the people to fight against the outrageous conditions which engulfed them. The development of the reform aspects of Roosevelt's New Deal program was a fundamental factor in undermining and preventing the further development of such movements. That the "panacea" movement did not become perverted into a real base for American fascism was also due in no small measure to the activities of the Communist Party in exposing their economic fallacies, in combatting their reactionary leaders, and in directing their masses into more practical channels of political struggle.13

As in all methods of communication, language and images were central to efforts of the radicals to press their claims, attract converts and make their versions of reality stick. The manipulation of language and image within particular ideological orbits created potent symbols about which masses could collect for action. Obviously others were equally repelled. Thus each potent symbol acted as an electrical or magnetic charge, both attracting and repelling simultaneously, polarizing the inchoat public into positive and negative sectors. Language itself became, in Kenneth Burke's parlance, "symbolic action," allowing for mobilization to achieve the ends of the movement and for oppositional mobilization to prevent it. Holy wars were waged in the arena of language. As Burke put it in 1935 at the American Writers' Conference, myth was "the social tool for welding a sense of interrelationship by which the carpenter and the mechanic, though differently occupied, can work together for a common

social end."[14] That end was defined by the symbols and their significance, in turn, was defined by the mythology of the movement which created and sustained them. Polemic explained paradox (poverty in the midst of plenty), pointed to prescription or panacea, and resulted in polarization, the separation of people into convenient groups of victims or oppressors, adherents or enemies, each defined by the relevant and potent symbols and attendant myths of the ideology. As Virgil Jordan explained in the North American Review in 1930, "In the end, for the great mass of humans, creative satisfaction must be vicarious; the frustrations of reality must be sublimated in some symbols, and progress be largely a process of substituting one symbol for another; the weaker and more sterile carrier of men's energies must be replaced by a stronger and more creative one if life is to find a larger measure of fulfillment."[15] This conclusion seems one that would have found little argument from radicals in the thirties: they were all adept at symbol manipulation and symbolic action.

The radical solutions advocated by Fascists, Socialists, Communists, Technocrats and others during this period were cut from the cloth of America; they were couched in the language and thought of America even if they also had "foreign roots." These roots led competitors to accuse one another often of being "foreign-dominated," or of being "hyphenated-Americans," or, on more racially related issues, of being led by Jews or of favoring Negroes (usually called by other less savory terms)--which were, of course, "unAmerican." But, nevertheless, the language they

used often reflected the fact that America was different from Europe, that America's problems were her own, and that she must work out her own unique destiny. Arguments and justifications for their interpretations, for instance, were provided in quantitative terms many times, typical of American thinking which Henry Steele Commanger has suggested is inclined "to place a quantitative evaluation upon almost everything." Solutions for most problems, as Commanger continued, have tended in America to be quantitative--"and education, democracy, and war all yielded to the sovereign remedy of numbers. Foreigners who thought this vulgar had no conception of its origin or its connection with the realities of American life, and this because it was so hard for the foreign imagination to conceive of power and quantity in American terms."[16] Ewan Clague and Webster Powell published Ten Thousand Out of Work in 1933, a study of unemployment whose title was a masterful understatement;[17] there were disputes in that year over whether the number actually out of work was eight or seventeen million.[18] Mauritz A. Hallgren, writing in The Nation, February 10, 1932, asked, "How Many Hungry?" and answered that demoralizing feelings of insecurity had already reduced "hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Americans to dangerous despair."[19] J. Prentice Murphy, director of the Children's Bureau of Philadelphia, told Hallgren that the number of unsettled migrants, "may run as high as 2,000,000"; William Hodson, executive director of the Welfare Council of New York City, told him that 250,000 families in his city were in need.[20] In 1930 Grace M. Burnham wrote of "The creation of a vast reserve army of the unemployed;" in 1932 James Barnett accused "the bosses" of

"slaughtering millions of workers in the war 'to make the world safe for (capitalist) democracy'" and using machinery to "speed-up" or "stretch-out" work. This resulted, he said, in "A thousand mechanical slave-drivers continually hammer[ing] the backs and muscles of each man, setting an exhausting and killing pace."[21] Even Fortune spoke in apocalyptic tones, introducing a series of articles in 1932 by saying, "'No One Has Starved' . . . which is not true. 'Twenty-Five Millions in Want'--which may be true before the winter is over. 'America Faces the Facts'--which is true today for the first time as a result of the Federal Relief Act of 1932. Under these headlines FORTUNE presents the whole story of unemployment relief: the story of an industrial problem which charity has attempted unsuccessfully to solve."[22] (Fortune's ellipsis) Of course the situation no doubt called for some kind of quantitative measurement (25 million starving called for more drastic measures than a few hundred thousand doing so), but that fact does not deny the quantitative tendencies of American thought, or its use by the radical press.

An important bone of contention in the radical press in this period was the issue of roots. The concern for the uniquely American responses to the environment of the New World was a long-standing one. As Howard Mumford Jones has suggested, following the American Revolution, "Sound American doctrine required a turning away from the decayed, corrupt, and feudal Europe and the substitution of a republican culture for its outworn traditions."[23] Even though the radicals sought to depart fundamentally from "republican culture," there was danger for

them in abandoning the assumption that America was a different land from corrupt Europe and therefore required different solutions to her problems. They seemed not to lose sight of that fundamental condition of American life.

There were exceptions, of course. The Partisan Review, for instance, an organ of the John Reed Club of New York, declared in its first issue that it proposed "to concentrate on creative and critical literature, but we shall maintain a different viewpoint--that of the revolutionary working class." It continued, "We shall combat not only the decadent culture of the exploiting classes but also the debilitating liberalism which at times seeps into our writers through the pressure of class-alien forces. We shall resist every attempt to cripple our literature by narrow-minded, sectarian theories and practices."[24] The Daily Worker was perhaps even more forthright, for by 1933 the paper was already praising Stalin, a practice which would become "a disease during the late thirties and forties . . . . "[25]

The reluctance of radicals to abandon the special character of America led them to cloak their calls for revolutionary action in traditional American God-terms: democracy, justice, Christianity. Charles Coughlin's weekly newspaper was called Social Justice and he created the National Union for Social Justice to organize his followers into a political force. He told these followers in 1938 that,

> I maintain that, as American citizens, we should pledge ourselves, singly and unitedly, to cease sniping at our democratic form of government . . . . America can work out her destiny thoroughly, efficiently and prosperously with democratic representatives who will represent, and with an executive and

> judiciary branch of government which will abide by our Constitution. This Constitution is part and parcel of our social life; it is its heart![26]

Coughlin was always careful in his condemnations not to criticize the institutions of American democracy. Though he had been a Roosevelt supporter during the early period of the New Deal, he gradually began to criticize and by 1937 was telling his readers and listeners that, "The only conclusion to be drawn from all the facts which are available is that Mr. Roosevelt wants to be a dictator."[27] Two years later he called Roosevelt "the most powerful and most dangerous man in existence today . . . . "[28]

Coughlin also played upon the religious sentiments of Americans. He told them, "If there must be 'fronts' let us have a Christian Front! . . . . A Christian Front that will NEVER compromise with Communism, Fascism, Nazism or any other movement tending to destroy representative government. . . . A Christian Front which is not afraid of the word 'fascist' because it knows the word 'fascist' is merely bandied about as part of Communism's offense mechanism."[29] Quoting from America, Social Justice in 1939 accused The Nation of conducting "a vicious campaign to sling slime at [Coughlin] and of a determination to silence him." "More than that," America had concluded, with Social Justice quoting approvingly, "*the attack on Father Coughlin has become, in reality, an attack on Catholicism!*"[30] (Social Justice's italics)

Even more pointed in wrapping itself in Christianity was Pelley's: The Silvershirt Weekly, a publication of the Silvershirts headed by William Dudley Pelley. "It has become the

conviction," Pelley wrote, "of the best-informed leaders of the Christian political movement in the United States that revolution, with its attempt at setting up an open Jewish dictatorship, is only a matter of months away and maybe only weeks."[31] The Weekly, published in Asheville, North Carolina, was unabashedly anti-Semitic, and seemed to equate Christianity itself with anti-Semitism. As it reported to its readers on January 22, 1936, "Ruthless riot, savage murder, unspeakable insolence toward the law-abiding Christian citizen, these distinguish the present state of affairs here in Minnesota, where a Governor raised among Jews and surrounded by Jews seems to be doing all within his power to make this state the first Communistic political unit in the American union."[32]

Coughlin was more subtle in his anti-Semitism, but did tell his readers that, "A Christian Front . . . will not fear to be called 'anti-Semitic' because it KNOWS the term 'anti-Semitic' is only another pet phrase of castigation in Communism's glossary of attack."[33] Coughlin also claimed that Bolshevism was "ORGANIZED AND WORKED BY JEWS WHO HAVE NO NATIONALITY, AND WHOSE OBJECT IS TO DESTROY FOR THEIR OWN ENDS THE EXISTING ORDER OF THINGS . . ." (emphasis in original) and that the accusation that Hitler intended to annihilate the Jews was "balderdash" which he was inclined to dismiss "with an inelegant ejaculation . . . . ."[34] He also excused Nazi Germany for its persecutions of Jews, Protestants and Catholics because it was "the great political rampart against the spread of Communism. As such," he said, "the Rome-Berlin axis is serving Christendom in a particularly important manner."[35]

Left-wing radicals did not directly wrap themselves in religion or religious symbols, as did those on the right, and they did not accuse their opponents of being members of particular racial or ethnic groups in order to denounce them *ad hominem*. By and large, they were issue-oriented, but were militant in their opposition to Fascism and those whom they identified as Fascists or Fascist sympathizers. New Masses, for instance, recognized that it had both friends and enemies. It identified them in January of 1934.[36]

But the radical press on the left was reluctant still to distance itself too far from traditional American values. As Irving Howe and Lewis Coser observed, "Furiously energetic, driving its members to both ecstacy and exhaustion, the [Communist] party suffered from a hopeless contradiction in the early thirties. It repeatedly proclaimed that its goal was to break out of its isolation and become a rooted part of American life; it strained every nerve and muscle to achieve that end; but its ideology and ingrained habits of life were insuperable handicaps."[37] The Daily Worker went so far as to praise Catholic Bishops and to make ideological concessions to Catholic theology. "Similar and more successful efforts were made to penetrate Jewish communal life."[38] The New Militant, organ of the Worker's Party, announced its own arrival by saying that it would not be "independent or neutral but will strive in all respects to represent the aims and ideals of the party as laid down in the Declaration of Principles and to reflect its revolutionary spirit." It observed, however, that,

> The American workers are moving now in true

> American style--rapidly and with militant disregard for any kind of obstructions. The New Militant will march with them, talk to them in their own language, and aid them in their struggle. To awaken the discontented workers to class consciousness and draw them toward the party in the course of their endeavors in the class struggle--this will be the chief endeavor of the New Militant.[39]

And, it continued in a particularly perceptive vein,

> We must make our revolution in America, not in some other country and not on the moon. That means, if we are to go at our work seriously, that our paper must concern itself primarily with the actualities of American life and talk to the workers in their own language. It is necessary to show that we understand them in order to make them understand us. The American people have not inherited conservatism nor the tendency to balk at revolutionary solutions. They overthrew the rule of a king and broke the institutions of chattel slavery by means that were far from polite.[40]

New Masses, too, made occasional nods in the direction of protecting "democracy."[41] Even Partisan Review, which so clearly announced its intentions to champion the cause of the "revolutionary working class," would pay deference to American ideals from time to time. It ran a series, for instance, in 1936 on "What is Americanism? A Symposium on Marxism and the American Tradition," in which Theodore Dreiser suggested that identifying communism with the "powerful emotional force of Americanism" would make change "easier to bring about." He warned that, "it is a part of Americanism to resent any present influence and connection with Europe. And it is for just this reason that Marxian ideology would do well to fit itself to such an adaptable form--our revolutionary tradition--even if it has to lose its own identity."[42] And finally, the first issue of People's World, a

Socialist newspaper published in Berkeley, California, declared in an editorial that it would "defend the will of the majority, of 27,000,000 voters, who re-elected Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936 to protect their rights and to give a more abundant life to the common man . . . . " The paper continued by saying that only under Socialism could all toiling people be guaranteed security and democracy but that it must do first things first: fight the miseries of recession and defend the New Deal.[43]

In this atmosphere of competitive salvation, hawked by those to whom all other salvation schemes were anathema, it was normal practice to play upon fear or to attribute strength and power to those seen as purveyors of damnation, destruction and death. In general, this meant that the right-wing press attacked the left, and the left-wing the right, as would be expected. Such rhetorical postures would be useful both as means to encourage more personal sacrifice to counter the alleged rising tide of their opposite number and as reminders of the nature of the "holy war" Ewhich they were fighting--the forces of light versus the forces of darkness. But the battle was not always so clean. Sometimes factions on one side needed a "score card" to know the players. Within the left particularly, factions would attempt to discredit one another in order to bring sympathetic potential converts to the "higher truth."[44] The New Militant, for instance, attempted to draw a distinction between the Socialist Party and the Communist Party by saying,

> Unlike the Communist (Stalinist) Party, which has sunk deeper and deeper into the mire of reformism and social-patriotism, the Socialist Party has freed itself from the strangulating

> domination of the Right wing and has advanced towards the position of revolutionary Marxism on a number of basic questions, notably on the question of war, the central question of our time.
>
> Unlike the Communist Party, in which the bureaucracy has stifled every last remnant of party democracy, outlawing all views contrary to those imposed upon the ranks by an appointed officialdom, the Socialist Party openly takes a stand for internal democracy, welcomes revolutionists into its ranks and offers the possibility of putting forward in its midst the rounded views of consistently revolutionary Marxism.[45]

And Michael Gold, editor of the New Masses in the late thirties, in his book, The Hollow Men, attacked Edmund Wilson, Lewis Mumford, Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, Malcolm Cowley, Archibald MacLeish and others, even though they had written material which might be judged sympathetic to the Communist cause, because of their lack of true class consciousness.[46]

More vitriolic, however, were the attacks made by radicals on their opposite number, or on those identified as scapegoats for national ills. In the first category, Social Justice reminded its readers that, "This might be one of the most important messages ever to come to you. Father Coughlin on the radio--speaking to 25,000,000 Americans COULD SAVE AMERICA. Father Coughlin silent! Who then will speak out? . . . . REMEMBER--MOSCOW IS AIDING AMERICAN COMMUNISTS. SHALL AMERICAN CHRISTIANS NOT HELP THEMSELVES?"[47] More to the point was Social Justice's accusation the following year: "It is impossible to slander the Communist Party, for it has been guilty of more rot than the agile mind of any capable liar could imagine . . . . Reds shrink from the truth like rats from poison . . . . "[48] The paper also attacked those whom it identified with "reds." It captioned a

photograph of John Brophy, Homer L. Martin and John L. Lewis, for instance, as follows: ". . . John L. Lewis, un-elected boss of the C.I.O., labor dictator of America, and 'contact' man with the Russian strategists who are now outlining the American revolution."[49]

Pelley's Weekly also cut a wide swath of damnation. In January, 1936, it damned both the Democratic and Republican parties, brushing them with condemnation by association with two clearly-identified devils: Communists and bankers.

> The Democratic Party of the United States is already known far and wide as the Red Party. Its nominee is the popular candidate among Communists everywhere. The Republican Party never countenanced the radicalism of the New Deal but it stands for the perpetuation of a money-bund whose doom is written upon the walls of the Temple of National Improvement.[50]

The Silvershirts also, and not unexpectedly, condemned Jews and other "non-Aryans." Pelley noted in 1934 that the Silvershirts "have perceived in the ethics and strategies of the megalomaniacal Jew, a menace to the social peace and welfare which cannot be removed until a whole nation takes cognizance of this radical and revolutionary faction in its midst and permanently 'binds' it so that honest men can function. Within another year the entire United States will have awakened to the fact that the Jewish Problem takes precedence over all other problems begging public attention."[51] It was as though Pelley had lost track of the depression in his obsession with damning "devils" and offering his brand of "salvation." Almost two years later the Weekly asked the loaded question, "What Is a White Man?," a question Pelley obviously thought he had answered convincingly. The words,

"white man," he said, mean more than merely the color of a man's skin. "Rather it denotes inner nobility of character which is essentially a white man's quality. A man who 'acted like a White Man,' is immediately thought of as a person of high integrity, whose code is honor and whose acts, correspondingly, can only be to fight for the good and true, to destroy the evil and corrupt."[52]

Condemnation ran in the opposite direction as well. Writing in Modern Monthly in 1933, George Britt noted that Pelley had bragged of his invitation to become an honorary member of the Hitlerite Germanic League and of the decisions of some Ku Klux Klan members to become Silvershirts. He continued, "Few propagandists have exceeded Pelley in industry. He has revived the defunct and exploded Elders of Zion, imported Hitlerist defamations, and contributed originally to the canon of anti-Semitism."[53]

Edward Dahlberg wrote in New Masses in 1934 that in the United States, "it is the American Legion, the Patriotic Coalition Societies, A. F. of L. officials and Congressmen who are giving the illiterate Pelley's and Art Smiths [leader of the Khaki Shirts in Philadelphia] their support."[54] A month following Dahlberg's assessment, Marguerite Young told New Masses readers that Charles Coughlin's Committee for the Nation was "perhaps the most dangerous organ of American fascism-in-embryo."[55] Of Coughlin himself, she declared, "Surely the Rasputin role of avowed Power-Behind-the-Dictator would not be unsavory to the Radio Crusader of Royal Oak."[56] More colorful in his denun-

ciations, though less direct in identifying his targets, was John Strachey. " . . . it is probable that these [Fascist] organizations, using the wildest type of anti-negro, anti-Jew, pro-jingo demagogy, stand a good deal more chance of success than do saner-sounding Fascist movements."[57]

A. B. Magill provided New Masses readers with a lengthy description of Father Charles Coughlin's following. He wrote,

> In the scramble now taking place in this country for the role of Der Fuehrer Father Coughlin has a number of advantages over his rivals.
>
> In the first place, he has an established following [estimated at 10,000,000]. Coughlin has the largest independent radio network in the country (twenty-eight stations) and his potential audience is said to be 60,000,000. What the priest has lacked has been organizational crystalization of his mass influence. The launching of the National Union for Social Justice is intended to do the job. Discounting his bombastic membership claims [200,000 since November 11 when it was first announced] there is, nevertheless, no doubt that he has a mass movement well under way.[58]

Describing Coughlin himself, Magill called him "undoubtedly a spellbinder of a superior sort, a master at expounding his ideas in popular form . . . . , an established mountebank, a master demagogue, thoroughly devoid of principle."[59] And lastly, Magill asked, "Will Father Coughlin be the American Hitler?" and said that the answer to this question depended both on Coughlin and on "the American capitalist class." It also depended, he said, on how quickly the militant labor movement could expose Coughlin as a "budding fascist." He concluded that, "One thing is clear: the National Union for Social Justice is a national union for the preparation of fascism; its real headquarters is not in Royal

Oak, but in Wall Street."[60] In bold strokes, then, Magill had identified the devil, set out the strategy for defeating him, and warned through inference what the evils were for failing to act. The means to achieve salvation from this "budding fascist" demon were thus made clear.

Finally, the black left-wing radical press also identified Fascism as an obvious threat, both ideologically and racially. A. Ward wrote in the Harlem Liberator that, "Most Negroes in America and the colonies do not realize that fascism is the greatest danger which confronts not only the working class, but it is the hostile environment against the Negro race as well."[61] The Communist Party, on the other hand, was equated by the Liberator with salvation. An editorial in 1933 declared, "As a result of the consistent fight carried on by the Communists for Negro rights, there is evident throughout Harlem and every Negro community a deep and ever-growing sympathy with the Communist Party. Workers, in particular, are showing more interest in the Communist program as they come to realize the role played by the [Communist Party] in rallying the white ruling masses to the defense of the Negro people, subjected today to an increasingly savage attack as the economic crisis of world capitalism plunges to new depths."[62]

Perhaps the most formidable opponent to the contentious salvations offered by the radicals, however, came not from within their own ranks, nor from their ideological opposites, but from the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. The abilities of any radical group to entice converts from competitors, after all, would qualify merely as "sheep stealing," moving sympathizers

from one flock to another. The group which had to be tapped in order for growth in numbers and political power to develop were the ideologically naive, those whom the left would say were the victims of "false consciousness," those who believed in the possibilities of reform, or at least in the person and ability of the President.

Neither radicals on the right or the left consistently condemned Roosevelt's policies, if their positions are examined over the entire decade. But there were two observable and antithetical trends within the radical press regarding Roosevelt. The right-wing press, particularly Charles Coughlin and his paper, Social Justice, was an early supporter of Roosevelt and the New Deal, but became disillusioned and took a quick turn against him, ending the decade referring to Roosevelt as a would-be dictator and his policies as "red." A quick series of statements by Coughlin demonstrates this change in attitude. He was quoted in the New York Times in 1933, for instance, as defending Roosevelt, "a Protestant President who thinks right, who lives for the common man, who knows patience and suffering, who knows that men come before bonds and that human rights are more sacred than financial rights."[63] In January, 1934, Coughlin claimed in his weekly radio lecture that he honestly believed Roosevelt "disclaims any desire to be a financial dictator."[64] Two months later Coughlin told his listeners that, "it is the duty of every American citizen to support the NRA in its program for shorter hours, higher wages and the God-given right for the laboring man to organize."[65] A year later he was perhaps even more effusive

in his praise, congratulating the President for a speech he had delivered on January 4, 1935. "In clear cut phrases [Roosevelt] delivered an official statement of policy which committed himself and this Seventy-Fourth Congress to a deep, spiritual philosophy of Christian charity and social justice . . . . Thus, today, the members of the National Union for Social Justice can rejoice . . . . "[66] But less than two months following this endorsement Coughlin had apparently departed company with the President. He explained,

> Those first two years of the New Deal have failed to appreciate this immortal mark of leadership which, disdaining to compromise, turns not back, once it has set its hand to the plow, nor pauses to conciliate with tyranny or slavery once the battle cry of freedom has sounded.
>
> President Roosevelt not only compromised with the money changers and conciliated with monopolistic industry but he did not refrain from holding out the olive branch to those whose policies are crimsoned with the theories of sovietism and international socialism . . .
>
> The new deal, as he called it, was here! At last the joker and the hidden aces were to be removed from the deck of American economic progress. But somehow or other the cards dealt by the new deal contained the same joker, the same hidden cards which were found in the old deal. This time, however, not only the aces of high finance were wild; the kings of big industry were also wild![67]

By 1937 [quoted previously] he was telling his followers that Roosevelt wanted to be a dictator, and by 1939 had identified the President with the purveyors of sin and damnation itself, the Communists. "Although," he admitted, "President Roosevelt is no Communist," he claimed that no one had aided the Communists more than Roosevelt. And, he continued, "there is hardly a part of President Roosevelt's program and policy that does not further

the Communist plan of world revolution. Mr. Roosevelt's failure to solve America's economic problems has spread such confusion and chaos throughout the country that the Communist Party in the last few years has *more than doubled its membership.*"[68] [italics in original]

Part of the explanation for Coughlin's change of heart regarding Roosevelt, as well as his own large following, was explained by Charles J. Tull.

> Why did vociferous malcontents like Huey Long and Father Coughlin attract such enthusiastic followings during the administration of so popular a reform president as Franklin D. Roosevelt? The answer lies in the deep economic distress still endured by countless Americans in 1935 and Roosevelt's middle-of-the-road policies which antagonized both right and left. Despite all the efforts of the New Deal programs, there were still ten million Americans unemployed in 1935, and a perplexingly large number of Americans failed to qualify for any form of government relief.[69]

The remainder of the explanation, and perhaps more significant, lies in the fear which Coughlin apparently felt for international Communism and the fact that by the end of the decade the Communist Party had ceased fielding its own presidential candidates in favor of endorsing Roosevelt's re-election bid.[70]

Left-wing radicals began the decade organizing protests against economic and social conditions: unemployment, racism and the like.[71] They identified causes, such as the plight of the Scottsboro Boys in Alabama, as the most important means to achieve change, and used these causes as empirical demonstrations of the truth of their charges against the exploitative nature of American capitalist and racist society.[72] The Harlem Liberator, for instance, took great interest in the plight of southern

blacks, headlining stories, "5 Croppers Given Brutal Jail Terms, Penalized for Defending Themselves," concerning black farmers protecting themselves from armed lynchers in Alabama (May 6, 1933), and "1,000,000 In Moscow Protest Lynch Verdict, Soviet Workers in Mighty May Day parade Hail Abolition of Capitalist Race Hatreds," on the same date. It also advised its readers that, "Harlem workers are planning to take leading part [sic] in the worldwide demonstrations on August First against the Scottsboro frame-up and the hunger and war program of the ruling class and the increasing fascist attacks on the working-class, carried out with special ferocity against the Negro masses."[73] The Liberator used the well-known "devil-terms" of black America, too, to speak to its audience in their own language and to link their experiences with its ideology. It advised the Harlem public that the Scottsboro Boys "Objected to Being Called 'Niggers,'" (May 6, 1933) and reported from Battle Creek, Michigan, concerning one of the federal government's relief labor projects under the headline "Jim Crow, Insult Negroes at Roosevelt's Forced Labor Camps." It reported:

> We are treated like dogs, not human beings, by being given the worst jobs to do . . . . We are "Jim Crowed" and deprived of the rights and privileges the rest of the [white] boys enjoy . . . .
>
> The food given us isn't fit for a dog to eat and we nearly fall over eating it. The coffee tastes like varnish, and it just burns the hell out of your stomach . . . . No milk in our coffee because that's for the other boys. Boiled potatoes is the main food here, and you never miss them.[74]

With such reports and editorials, utilizing the well-known symbols of oppression and contrasting them with the salvation-

symbols of the left, the Liberator was able to posit the choice for Harlem blacks as a stark decision between sin and salvation. It doubted not which choice they would make if they clearly understood the nature of their choice.

Another example of such readership building, and ideology-mongering, was the experience of the New Masses when it began publishing in late 1933. As Joseph North recollected,

> The [first] issue caught on phenomenally. It contained the first of a series giving the low-down on native fascists who had begun to goose-step across America. Written by John L. Spivak, a reporter who had no fear and less tact, the style bordered on the sensational. The style was the man: Spivak moved on the enemy with a D'Artagnan-like insouciance: he had a way of walking in on the fascists, forearmed with damning evidence he had already collected, and, throwing them into consternation by the facts he already knew, he wrung further admissions from them. By the time they regained their wits, he had his story. I know our Brahmins would denounce his sensationalism, but I was sure most readers would applaud. They clamored for more.75

As Spivak himself later recalled,

> When the New Masses appeared on the newsstands with my Plotting America's Pogroms series, circulation trippled [sic] almost overnight. The demand for the ten cent magazine was so great that newsstand dealers bootlegged copies at twenty-five cents each, and sometimes more, and the magazine received numerous telephone and mail complaints from persons unable to buy even a bootlegged copy.76

A good example of Spivak's writing style is this description from his ironically-titled book, Georgia Nigger:

> Georgia Crackers were in the saddle, a rising white trash class squeezing wealth from blacks freed from slavery. Crackers had seized power to vote so they were the law, and by legal trickery had maneuvered the niggers into another bondage. Trash who had lived like

> slaves were now building mansions on the bent backs of niggers and those whites with contempt for Cracker thievery had to live there, carry on their businesses, raise their families. Protests would mean business pressure, social pressure, community pressure, for most Ochlockonee whites dreamed of riding to riches on the descendants of slaves. The Cracker was riding high, with the law in one hand and the whip in the other. The proclamation to free niggers had really only reduced prices for niggers. White trash who never had a thousand dollars or fifteen hundred dollars to pay for a slave could get niggers now for a few hundred dollars a head by giving them an advance against wages.
>
> Times change and new ways of getting slaves are cunningly devised.[77]

In spite of the negatively loaded language used here, Spivak's work was actually a compassionate portrait of the plight of southern blacks, particularly those who had been impressed illegally or quasi-legally into chain gangs.

This is not meant to imply that the left-wing radical press ignored Roosevelt or the New Deal. He was an obvious competitor and it was his *persona* which was synonomous with his programs and the threat emanating from them for radical movements, a view which was shared by the radical press on the right as well. To return to the Harlem Liberator, it reported on July 1, 1933, that the Ku Klux Klan was being mobilized in Fenton, New York, "to terrorize Harlem youths recruited into forced labor camps under Roosevelt's 'reforestation' plan"--shades of the Gulag.[78] On the same day the Liberator reported, "The boss press is full of ballyhoo designed to make the workers believe that the Roosevelt Industrial Recovery Act will bring back prosperity."[79] A week later the paper made a full-scale attack on Roosevelt's programs under the headline, "Harlem Suffers While Boss Press Spouts

'Recovery' Ballyhoo."

> Roosevelt has laid his cares on the table and the following facts have already come to light: millions of workers will never return to work; millions of young workers who have never worked will not get work. Hundreds of thousands of old workers will be thrown out.
>
> All talk and pretense of unemployment insurance has been forgotten by Roosevelt and his "brain trust," while he puts out new schemes to deceive the workers, holding out to them the bait of "RECOVERY."80 [capitals in original]

Two weeks later the Liberator accused the President of creating "chiefly a new deal for the munitions makers who are gleeful over the fact that Roosevelt uses government funds so generously for new war machinery."[81]

The Liberator's attacks on the Roosevelt administration were not lone cries from the left. An editorial in the Modern Monthly suggested at the time of the President's inauguration that,

> Only one hope remains. The same hope that prevailed in November when the people, dazed by the failure of Hoover, the pre-technocratic efficiency man of the twenties, succumbed to the liquor-promising logic of Franklin D. Roosevelt. In less than a month now, Roosevelt, the flag-waving emissary of Barney Baruch, on the one hand, and the simple, spineless idol of the lower middle-classes on the other, will inaugurate a new dispensation of economic reforms which will attempt to appease the spirit of the country but not its belly. But already the spirit as well as the belly of the people has begun to growl, and once these reforms fail to work the growl will turn into a shout which will not be put down by words and promises any longer.
>
> The reason democracy at the present time is still such a rickety, bowlegged, puking brat is that it has been fed upon nothing more substantial than the pap and pastry of political rhetoric.82

John L. Spivak had harsh words for the President, too, publishing a series of articles in Ken in 1938 under the title, "A Measure

of Recovery," and in a book in 1935, America at the Barricades, titled with particular ideological connotations. In Barricades Spivak damned the administration by including interviews with its employees, such as the following one with John T. Wentz, statistician for the Louisiana branch of the Department of Labor's National Re-employment Service and a Spanish-American War veteran.

> [Wentz] looked at the stacks of cards.
>
> "War veterans. Lots of them," he said. "Begging for bread and those bastards who got rich off the war are still rich.
>
> He paused and added:
>
> "Patriotism, mister, don't pay a God-damn bit!"
>
> "What good does it do to hate the government?"
>
> "I don't hate the government. I hate all those God-damned politicians who are just working for the rich, not for the people. The government's feeding me. Sure. Since I've been here on this job, I've had my salary cut twice. Everybody has, but the government didn't stop the business men from raising the prices on bread and milk and meat--some of them have doubled in price since the NRA started."
>
> He talked from an overflowing heart.[83]

Such condemnation was not any more consistent from the left as the praise had been from the right. As a matter of fact, about the time Coughlin was unleashing his initial attacks on Roosevelt, the Communists were reassessing their own.[84] As Howe and Coser explained concerning the situation in 1936,

> What was to be said about Roosevelt, the Roosevelt whom [Earl] Browder had described as treading a "middle path" between fascism and democracy but who was nonetheless the implied favorite of the party? During the last months of the election campaign the Daily Worker solved this problem in a quite remarkable way: it said almost nothing about Roosevelt. Brow-

> der was quoted at great length; [Norman] Thomas was sniped at; [Alf] Landon was endlessly attacked as a sort of advance guard of fascism (a silly exaggeration, since he was merely a dull conservative); but Roosevelt, the desired candidate, the candidate who was about to sweep the country, barely appears in the paper during the last weeks of the campaign. It was a case, perhaps, of preference through silence, and more probably of the difficulties met while negotiating a major shift of preference.[85]

They continued, "In Communist writings between 1937 and 1939 there remains a slight element of criticism toward the New Deal--especially when relief appropriations were cut and Loyalist Spain was subjected to a damaging embargo--but to find many examples of such criticism one must search very diligently."[86] By the end of the decade the most virulent critics of Roosevelt from the left were Socialists, not Communists.

The reasons for the change in the left regarding Roosevelt were several, as had been the case for the mounting opposition from the right. But the situations to which the antithetical dogmas were responding were only indirectly connected. In other words, it was not merely a matter of interpretation, although what Coughlin saw as Communist elements in the New Deal, leftists tended to see as Fascist ones.

Although Roosevelt was no Communist, the recovery program initiated in 1933 did accept the principle of planning in many areas of the economy, creating an obvious philosophical affinity to the Soviet economic system.[87] Second, the predictions made by those on the left about the prospects for salvation through revolution had obviously not been borne out, and the situation in 1938 was improving, not deteriorating. As William Z. Foster

later wrote about the impact of the New Deal on economic conditions, "Indeed, if it had not been for Roosevelt's program, the workers during this period would have gone much further than they did and almost certainly would have broken away from the two-party system and launched a political party of their own."[88] Third, while the left's diagnosis of the problems of America may have fallen on sympathetic ears, their proposals for change apparently did not. As Edmund Wilson observed about the working class as early as 1932, "The aims and ideals of the bourgeoisie in America have seemed to be absorbing the working class, and this made us inclined to scoff at the Marxist bogies."[89] His comment would probably have been as accurate if written eight years later. Fourth, as Howe and Coser explain, was the shocking non-aggression pact signed by Hitler and Stalin in 1939.[90] And last was Roosevelt's position on war.

> Once Roosevelt made his famous "Quarantine the Aggressor" speech in Chicago, in October, 1937, the Communists grew lyrical about the virtues of his administration, for in advocating collective security he took the one path they most desired him to take. Roosevelt's picture now appeared regularly on the front page of the Daily Worker, which sometimes went so far as to imply that he was as great a man as Browder. In early 1939 the CP began booming the President for a third term: he is a leader, wrote the generous Browder, who stands "on the same plane as Jefferson, Jackson and Lincoln."[91]

These events did not occur all at once, of course, but the beginning of a new "honeymoon" between Roosevelt and certain elements of the left, notably the Communist Party, was initiated about the same time as his divorce from other elements at the opposite end of the political spectrum became final.

A third option to replace the reforms of the Roosevelt administration, and one which received much less press than either the politically left- or right-wing radicals and but scant attention here, was Technocracy. Technocracy, based its proponents said, in the work of Thorsten Veblen and in the technical arts created by scientific advance, proposed to replace the outmoded monetary system with an economic system based vaguely on the production and consumption of energy. This, too, was a radical solution to the nation's ills, if not necessarily a "political" one. Much of the hostility, Stuart Chase contended, arose "from the incapacity of the critic to think about economic activity with the dollar signs omitted."[92] As Chase summarized the views of the technocrats,

> *The technical arts cannot be halted. As they march they are exploding employment, money values and vested interests. The price system cannot withstand an indefinite series of such explosions without collapse. At which point, if we can keep our wits about us and see that the collapse is one of paper only, we have the opportunity to institute a more modern system, amenable to the laws of physics, capable of dealing with 154,000 kilogram calory magnitudes and upwards, and perhaps solving the economic problem for all time. It should be operated, says Technocracy with charming modesty, by technicians.*93 [italics in original]

Science was the new messiah to the technocrats, the salvation of the economy. Something had to go, Chase argued, either "eighteenth century economic and political institutions," as Veblen had argued, or twentieth-century power. It was obvious that power would not go, Chase said, for it was based on scientific knowledge which could not be "suppressed, reversed, or blunted. Above all it cannot be stopped by refusing to recognize

it; by cutting it dead. There the damn thing is. It will not stand indefinite barricading by captains of industry as this depression proves; it will not tolerate the shackles of outmoded institutions."[94]

Technocracy deserved to be implemented, said Allen Raymond, as a means to achieve democracy in America. "Democracy is a quest," he said, "an adventure. What this Technocracy may be has not yet appeared completely. But if all that Technocracy as a social design can offer is government by a Soviet of engineers--away with it! In that case, long after Technocracy has vanished into the oblivion of passing fads, one conjectures, men and women of intelligence and gallantry will still be fighting, and slowly winning, toward one great and inevitable goal long known in this country."[95] Technocracy deserved a chance, Frank Arkright contended, because it would renew the hope of Americans.

> This is a disturbing book. Not long ago a person who did not think that things were getting better and better was called an alarmist and as such was put in a class with gloomy professors and soapbox orators. Now of a sudden [sic] there are a great many people who think that things are not getting any better. And they are quite right. For more than three years the American people have been attempting to recapture their courage and renew the strength of their unhappy country, and without success. Today a person who talks of prosperity is regarded with suspicion. People are sore and badgered; the future appears hopeless.
>
> Is there, they ask, any chance of returning to that golden prosperity that vanished in the fall of '29? The answer is, No. We cannot return. Will our twelve million unemployed ever go back to their old jobs? No. Is there anything to hope for? Yes, there is. There is the hope for a nation of men and women--all of them--secure from want and enforced idleness. We have now the means to accomplish this.[96]

That means, of course, that the salvation and hope offered was Technocracy. And Technocracy should be tried, Howard Scott implied, because there were no other adequate formulas to solve America's problems. "Neither Capitalism, Socialism, Communism, nor Fascism, presents an adequate formula for the job which a society as highly technical as the United States today has to perform."[97]

The advocacy of Technocracy contained many of the same elements described earlier as attributes of the radical press' rhetoric: the diagnosis of problems, the appeal to the "working class," or in Arkright's bland phraseology, "a nation of men and women--all of them," the advocacy of a particular solution or salvation, and the equation of that solution with accepted standards, here the need for hope, the achievement of democracy and of America's manifest destiny as a people. This strategy, obviously not an unusual one from a rhetorical perspective, pointed the direction to salvation in technocratic terms. Technocrats advocated not reform but a radical departure--basically the destruction of a money-economy--in order to achieve the desired salvation. In this sense the technocrats were cut of the same rhetorical cloth as other radicals of the thirties, each of whom had identified a demon, outlined the sin which proceeded from that demon, and pointed out a particular path to salvation (defeat of the demon).

Each of these movements condemned Roosevelt's New Deal for some reason: it was too little too late, or infected by the tenets of Fascism or Communism, or protected vested interests

(principally bankers), and so on. Whatever the reason, though, clearly reform was a threat; it took the wind from the sails of radicals if it worked. It destroyed their versions of history and confounded their apocalyptic visions of the future. It was, in fact, more a threat than the rival radical solutions, for it already existed and was not merely rhetoric. Roosevelt, therefore, as high priest of reform was, or became, Beelzebub. (In this context, too, the Communist Party might have been said to have "sold their soul to the devil" when it decided officially to accept reform in the late thirties.) It was at Roosevelt, his programs and his cabal of devils--the "Brain Trust"--that they flung much of their invective. And it was, too, at rival ideologies and their versions of salvation that they railed, even if Roosevelt was a more concrete threat. As Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann have suggested, the existence of any other symbolic universe means that the one to which any person subscribes is less than inevitable.[98] Yet each radical movement argued for the inevitability of their explanations and solutions and attacked those who denied them, whether directly or indirectly, as benighted, or disingeneous, or misled and dangerous fools. They even attacked potential sympathizers and allies, when they were not making common cause or creating a "popular front" with them, for these "fellow travellers" constituted heresies which would turn believers from orthodoxy and "truth." It was as though a high-stakes poker game were being played (if Coughlin was correct, Roosevelt held all the "hidden aces") and what was at stake was not merely money, but the salvation of the common man and the soul of society itself.

The thirties were politically-conscious times, but they were also "religiously-conscious" ones as well, perhaps even more so. The new religions advocated were not the traditional ones, though they often came clothed in the trappings of organized religion, but they did play upon the religious consciousness of Americans, using religious imagery, God-terms and allusions to make their arguments. Even if those who became Fascists, or Communists, or Technocrats, did not "get religion," they did, nevertheless, become conscious of the nature of religion in a fundamental, though superficial, way. Reinhold Niebuhr explained to The Nation's readers some of the implications of this mesh of ideology and religion in culture. He wrote:

> Modern culture confronts in modern communism exactly the same problem that the Reformation and the Rennaisance faced in Catholicism at the dawn of the modern age. The Catholic church claimed to be, not a particular religious, political, and culture force imbedded in the feudal order and sanctifying particular political interests, but an absolute and transcendental force. It is because the claim of ultimate and absolute validity is always involved in religion that Marx rightly declared, "the beginning of all criticism is the criticism of religion." That truth must now be applied to Marxism itself in so far as it is not merely a political movement dealing with particular abuses but a religious movement claiming to have a solution for the ultimate problems of human existence. Catholics and Communists are both bound to resent this comparison. But that does not prove it to be untrue. Rival absolutists are not likely to recognize affinities in their conflicting ultimate claims, for they are too impressed by the difference in content to note the similarity in method.99

Niebuhr's comment could just as easily have been directed to Fascists, Socialists or Technocrats in thirties as to Communists.

There were clear similarities between the problems identified by each of these radical groups during the decade. In some cases the villains they identified were identical, as were the sins and their results. And the solutions advocated by these rival ideologies did share one thing in common: they were radical departures from the reformist tendencies in American tradition. But none of those competing for the soul of America were willing to see the similarities for, as Niebuhr commented, they were "too impressed by the difference[s]." Recognition, too, of the similarities between ideology and religion may have been, as Niebuhr only implied, slight. But it existed as a context for experience, as it was in this reflection by Angelo Herndon. "No, my discovery of Communism did not bring me religion, or a mystic faith; it gave me a purpose in living, in doing, in aspiring. Rational and scientific in its base, ethical in its motives, it is the only philosophy of living worthy of a thinking civilized man.[100]

ENDNOTES

1. Tillie Lerner, "The Strike," *Partisan Review* 1 (September-October 1934), 3.

2. *The Romance of American Communism* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1977), 13.

3. "The Thirties," *The Development of American Culture*, Stanley Coben and Loren Ratner, eds. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 181.

4. Ibid., 184.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., 188-89.

7. "In the editorial Ken," *Ken* 4 (May 18, 1939), 6.

8. (May 19, 1938), 97.

9. (April 13, 1939).

10. (April 27, 1939).

11. Speaking of the conditions among coal miners in Harlan County, Kentucky, Charles Rumford Walker of the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners headed by Theodore Dreiser listed blacklisted union miners (3,000 in all) as "living on union relief or starving," miners "whose families were in complete destitution." "Organizing a Union in Kentucky," *Harlan Miners Speak: Report on Terrorism in the Kentucky Coal Fields* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1932) Prepared by Members of the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners, reprint, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 39. Angelo Herndon, a black Communist arrested for his union-organizing activities in the South, wrote that the anger of victimized unemployed was "laughable in the extreme. It was like that of a puny man shaking his fist against the sky." *Let Me Live* (New York: Random House, 1937), 64. And Herndon's defense counsel, Benjamin J. Davis, who became a Communist as a result of Herndon's trial, wrote from a federal penitentiary in Terre Haute, Indiana, in 1969, wrote that Negro workers in the thirties were replaced by white workers in jobs "previously considered 'Negro jobs'--chauffering, for example. Indeed, several chauffeurs who had been working with white families for many years were suddenly framed on charges of intimacies with female members of the family and driven out of the city. *Communist Councilman from Harlem: Autobiographical Notes Written in a Federal Penitentiary* (New York: International Publishers, 1969), 50.

12. *The Plight of the Bituminous Coal Miner* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1934), 115.

13. *History of the Communist Party of the United States* (New York: International Publishers, 1952), 316-17.

14. "Revolutionary Symbolism in America," *Perspectives on Modern Literature*, Frederick J. Hoffman, ed. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1962), 181.

15. "The Era of Mad Illusions," *North American Review* (January 1930), 57.

16. *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880's* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), 7.

17. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933).

18. See Francis Perkins' *People at Work* (New York: The John Day Company, 1934), 125.

19. "How Many Hungry?" *The Nation* 134 (February 10, 1932), 159-61.

20. Ibid.

21. Grace M. Burnham, "Work or Wages: The Challenge of Unemployment" (New York: International Pamphlets, no. 4, 1930), 3; James Barnett, "Speeding Up the Workers" (New York: International Pamphlets, no. 6, 1932), 3.

22. "No One Has Starved," *Fortune* (September 1932), 19-28+.

23. *O Strange New World. American Culture: The Formative Years* (New York: The Viking Press, 1952), 313.

24. "Editorial Statement," *Partisan Review* 1 (February-March 1934).

25. Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, *The American Communist Party: A Cultural History (1919-1957)* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 228.

26. "Coughlinisms," *Social Justice* 5 (January 17, 1938), 1.

27. "'Dictatorship'--or Democracy/Control Over Court Will Put Executive Above Constitution," *Social Justice* (February 22, 1937); see also "Fear of Dictator Real as Congressmen Voice Their Confidential Views," *Social Justice* (June 21, 1937).

28. "President Roosevelt Wants War for U.S.!," *Social Justice* (April 24, 1939).

29. "America Needs a Christian Front," *Social Justice* (July 25, 1938).

30. "Their Target is Religion," *Social Justice* (August 7, 1939).

31. "Silvershirts Instructed to Prepare for Nation's Upset" (May 20, 1936).

32. "Minnesota Close to Red Abyss as Murder Terrorizes Voters."

33. "America Needs a Christian Front."

34. "Who Suppressed the Original British White-Paper--And Why," *Social Justice* (January 24, 1939) and "Red Jewish Bunk," *Social Justice* (January 9, 1939).

35. "Rome-Berlin Axis Is A Firm Rampart Against Communism," *Social Justice* (April 10, 1939).

36. *New Masses* claimed the "militant sections of the working class, the living core of which is the Communist Party" as its friends and named bankers, militarists, Fascists, labor fakers, Social Fascists, "and all other open or hidden defenders and apologists of the capitalist order," the Ku Klux Klan, Silver Shirts, Khaki Shirts and Crusaders as its enemies. It also noted that, "a more insidious form of Fascism is being foisted on the people, represented by the logical evolution of the National Recovery Act and Roosevelt's assumption of powers never attained by former Presidents in time of peace." *New Masses* 10 (January 2, 1934), 3.

37. *American Communist Party*, 217.

38. Ibid., 341, 342.

39. "The New Militant," *The New Militant* 1 (December 15, 1934).

40. Ibid.

41. *New Masses* 12 (July 24, 1934), 4.

42. *Partisan Review & Anvil* 3 (April 1936), 3, 4.

43. "Our Slogan--For Security, Democracy and Peace," *People's World* (January 1, 1938).

44. See Benjamin Stolberg's comments on the name-calling used by the Communists in America in *The Story of the CIO* (New York: Viking Press, 1938) reprint (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1971), 144.

45. "Statement of National Committee," *New Militant* 2 (June 6, 1936).

46. (New York: The International Publishers, 1941).

47. "America Needs This Voice," *Social Justice* (August 15, 1938).

48. "What Is the Reds' Best Tool? The Lie, Of Course," *Social*

Justice (July 24, 1939).

49. "Leaders Achieve Labor Harmony," *Social Justice* 4 (September 6, 1937).

50. "Why Should I Vote For the Christian Party?," *Pelley's: The Silvershirt Weekly* (January 29, 1936).

51. "Does the Jew Face Disaster?," *Pelley's* 1 (October 3, 1934).

52. *Pelley's* 2 (August 5, 1936).

53. "Jew-Baiting in America," *Modern Monthly* 2 (December 1933), 660.

54. "Nightgown Riders of America," *New Masses* 10 (January 30, 1934), 17-18.

55. "The Little Poison Flower," *New Masses* 10 (February 27, 1934), 13.

56. Ibid., 14.

57. "Fascism in America," *New Masses* 10 (January 2, 1934), 8.

58. "Father Coughlin's Army," *New Masses* 14 (January 1, 1935), 14.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid., 15.

61. "The Fascist Terror" (April 29, 1933).

62. "Exploiting the Sympathies of the Negro Masses for Communist Party" (June 3, 1933), editorial.

63. Quoted by Charles J. Tull in *Father Coughlin and the New Deal* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1965), 30.

64. Lecture delivered January 7, 1934, in *Eight Lectures on Labor, Capital and Justice* (Royal Oak, Michigan: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1935), reprint (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 22.

65. Lecture delivered March 11, 1934, Ibid., 111.

66. Lecture delivered January 6, 1935, in *A Series of Lectures on Social Justice* (Royal Oak, Michigan: The Radio League of the Little Flower, 1935) reprint (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 109.

67. Lecture delivered March 3, 1935, Ibid., 194, 199.

68. "Communist Order Drive for Roosevelt Election," *Social Justice* (July 10, 1939).

69. *Father Coughlin*, 90.

70. Tull explains that part of Coughlin's turn from Roosevelt was related to the President's refusal to advocate his silver plan to stabilize the currency, and the disclosure that Coughlin's Radio League held substantial silver holdings. *Father Coughlin*, 56.

71. See Foster's descriptions of the Party's early organizational efforts in the thirties, *Communist Party*, 282-83 and Howe's and Coser's account, *American Communist Party*, 192.

72. Howe and Coser suggest that the Scottsboro case "became an enormously effective propaganda theme for the American Communists." *American Communist Party*, 214.

73. "Workers Protest Terror, War Moves Aug. 1st.," *Harlem Liberator* (July 29, 1933).

74. (May 27, 1933).

75. *Strangers*, 94.

76. *A Man In His Time* (New York: Horizon Press, 1967), 271.

77. (New York: Brewer, Warren and Putnam, 1932), 138-39.

78. "Klan Menaces Harlem Youths in Labor Camp, Revolt Grows Against Roosevelt's 'New Deal'" (July 1, 1933).

79. "What's Back Of the Roosevelt 'Recovery' Ballyhoo," by S. Vanveen (July 1, 1933).

80. *Harlem Liberator* (July 8, 1933).

81. "The Recovery Act and the Drive for a New World War," by S. Vanveen (July 22, 1933).

82. "In Defense of the Democratic Tradition" (March 1933), 69-70.

83. (New York: Friede Publishers, 1935), 48.

84. For one view of the relationship between Roosevelt and the Communists, see Carmen A. Notaro's *Franklin Roosevelt and the American Communists: Peacetime Relations, 1932-1941* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1969), 60-6, 88-92, 119, 182-98, 211-13.

85. *American Communist Party*, 330.

86. Ibid.

87. See Daniel R. Fusfield's *The Economic Thought of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Origins of the New Deal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), 248-49.

88. *Communist Party*, 294.

89. *The American Jitters: A Year of the Slump* (Freeport, New York:

Books for Libraries Press, Inc., 1932), 298-99.

90. See *American Communist Party*, 315.

91. Ibid., 331-32.

92. *Technocracy: An Interpretation* (New York: The John Day Company, 1933), 17.

93. Ibid., 28.

94. Ibid., 20-1.

95. *What Is Technocracy?* (New York: Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1933), 180.

96. *The ABC of Technocracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1933), 2.

97. Interview August 21, 1932, with the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald Tribune*, quoted by Raymond Allen, *Technocracy*, 19.

98. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967), 108.

99. "Ideology and Pretense," *The Nation* (December 9, 1939), 646.

100. *Let Me Live*, 89.